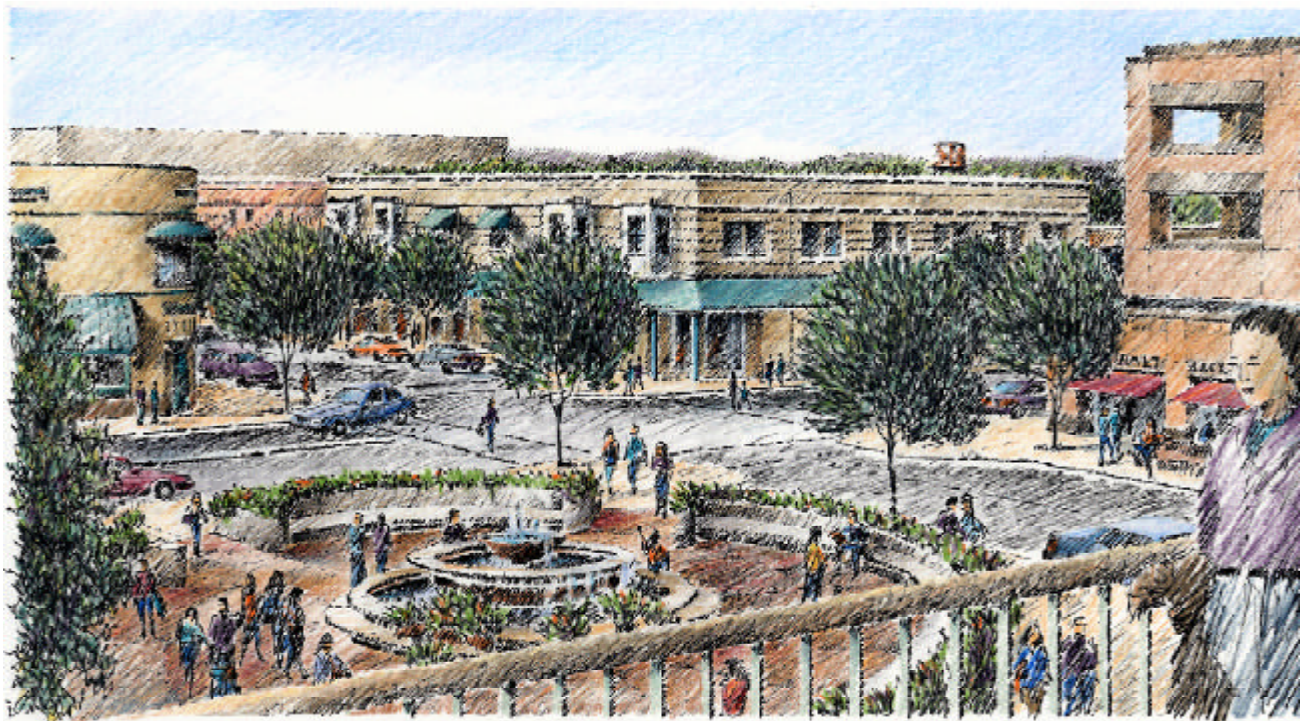




*Looking North on Murphy Avenue circa 1920's (Photo courtesy of Sunnyvale Historical Society and Museum)*



*A rendering of the intersection of Murphy Avenue and Washinton Avenue with the new plaza in front of Macy's.*



In roughly 150 years, the City of Sunnyvale has grown from Martin Murphy's 4,800-acre wheat and cattle ranch to today's city of 134,000 people, from the "City of Destiny" at the turn of the century to the "Heart of the Silicon Valley" today. In these intervening years, the city and the downtown have undergone several transformations, converting from original pastoral lands and oak groves supporting indigenous populations, to wheat farms and cattle ranches of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, later to fruit orchards and canneries, to defense industry works and factories in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to today's high technology campuses. Through these transitions the city has also been a destination for immigrant populations, promising to be a "poor man's paradise" where "hard work produced a plentiful bounty."

Vestiges of the past remain in and near the downtown. Street names evoke original settlers and residents; Murphy, Taaffe, Mathilda, and Martin Murphy's home, Bay View, are a few. Murphy Avenue, the downtown's traditional main street, was called "Main Street" in Sunnyvale's early history. Here, the town's first commercial structures emerged, extending two blocks from Evelyn Avenue south to McKinley Avenue where the original City Hall stood. The Del Monte Building, formerly the Madison and Bonner Building, is a city heritage landmark and anchors the northern end of the 100 block of Murphy near the original San Francisco and San Jose Railroad train station site. A Caltrain station still operates there. The original City Hall, a mission-style building at the intersection of Murphy and McKinley, was enhanced with cedars and redwoods donated by local residents. When the city hall was eventually demolished, the trees remained. The Sunnyvale Industrial Park has replaced the former Libby cannery north of the downtown, but the cannery water tower was saved and restored.

Other reminders have survived ambitious attempts to restructure the downtown. Although urban renewal efforts in the 1960's razed much of the original town center area north of Washington Avenue, the 100 block of Murphy managed to escape demolition due to federal rules on the use of urban renewal funds. Today, Murphy is once again the downtown's main street, the historic heart of the commercial core. As Sunnyvale's original commercial core expanded over time, it evolved into the Sunnyvale Plaza Shopping Center, "built in the tradition of Main Street USA," eventually occupying much of today's Town Center Mall site. Department stores such as Hart's, JC Penney, J.J. Newberry, Weinstein's, and Woolworth's once stood side by side with local independent retailers in a traditional commercial street environment. But the Sunnyvale Plaza Shopping Center gave way to today's Town Center Mall. The original City Hall's by-then mature trees were saved and incorporated into the mall's design, standing today in an outdoor garden in the center of the mall. Residential neighborhoods that surround the commercial core are valued for their character and the vitality they create for the downtown. Some neighborhoods have gained heritage landmark status.

It is in this context that the City of Sunnyvale intends to explore and implement a plan to improve the downtown, creating an urban design approach that merges the reminders of the past with a vision for the future.

Excerpted from the book Sunnyvale: From the City of Destiny to the Heart of the Silicon Valley by Mary Jo Ignoffo, 1994.